

Mexican Wolf Adaptive Management Work Group Final Summary Notes for Meeting of April 23, 2004

Location

Morenci Center, Morenci, Arizona

Attendees (not all Attendees signed in legibly)

Bobbie Holaday, Sandy Bahr, Nancy Kaminski, Barbara Marks, Sue Sefscik, Halina Szyposzynski, Ruela Metz, Sharon Morgan, Darry Dolan, and Mark Hansy (private citizens); Laura Schneberger (New Mexico Public Lands Coalition, New Mexico Cattle Growers Association, and Gila Cattlemen); Hector Ruedas and Kay Gale, Greenlee County – GRCO); Colleen Buchanan, John Oakleaf, Susan MacMullin, and Larry Bell (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service -- USFWS); Bud Starnes (New Mexico Department of Agriculture -- NMDA); Chuck Hayes (New Mexico Game and Fish Department -- NMDGF); Deion Hinton (White Mountain Apache Tribe -- WMAT); Michael Robinson (Center for Biological Diversity -- CBD); Jean Ossorio (Southwest Environmental Center -- SWEC); Kevin Wright (The Phoenix Zoo -- TPZ); David Bergman and Alan May (USDA APHIS Wildlife Services -- WS); Jon Cooley, Dan Groebner, Paul Overy, Deb O'Neill, and Terry Johnson (Arizona Game and Fish Department -- AGFD).

Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, Agenda Review, and Review of Action Items

Terry B. Johnson, Chair (AGFD), called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. He thanked all present for attending, with special thanks to Hector Ruedas and Kay Gale of Greenlee County for handling the logistics so well.

Attendees briefly introduced themselves. Then the ground rules were affirmed as the same as for previous meetings: minimize side-bar conversations; show respect for disparate opinions; raise hands for recognition; one person speak at a time; question-and-answer format; participants may address speakers or AMWG members directly – if that proves unworkable, the Chair will moderate more actively.

Attendees were informed that **Action Items** from the previous AMWG meeting were turned into Agenda Items for this meeting. The “Other Business” agenda item includes time for topics that were missed, and new items that attendees want to add.

Interagency MOU

The referenced Interagency MOU for the AZ-NM reintroduction project is available on the AGFD website at: http://www.azgfd.com/w_c/wolf_reintroduction.html, which has a link to the USFWS Mexican wolf recovery page.

MOU signatories to date include:

Lead Agencies: Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD)
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF)
White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT)
USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

AMWG Cooperators: Greenlee County
Navajo County
New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA)

All AMOC Lead Agencies have signed the MOU.

AMWG participants that have not signed on as Cooperators

Graham County has not signed, and participation status unknown..
Cochise County has not signed, and apparently intends to participate without signing.
Catron County declined to sign the MOU, but has confirmed that it intends to participate.
Sierra County wants to discuss alternative wording before deciding whether it will sign the MOU that has been approved by the other signatories.
San Carlos Apache Tribe is participating in AMOC meetings, but has not decided whether to sign the MOU.

Any government agency at the county level or above is eligible to sign the MOU. New Cooperators can be added as described on pages 12-13 in the MOU.

With NMDGF's signature on the MOU, the clock is ticking on the first deadline for all Cooperators: role and function statements must be completed within six months (i.e. final approved version to be presented at the October AMWG 15 meeting). A work group has been established for this task, and a draft will be discussed at the July 9 AMWG meeting.

Various aspects of the MOU were discussed with attendees. Several questions indicated a desire to have a single agency or individual responsible for AMWG and its actions. Attendees were reminded that the MOU establishes a framework for participation in a collaborative adaptive management program that is intended to provide each agency with a better foundation for the decisions that it must make in its unique areas of legal authority and responsibility.

Question: What will the work product be for roles and functions? **Response:** A document that will identify roles, functions, and responsibilities for members. It is intended to provide detail as necessary to implement the MOU.

Question: Can you say anything about what the County concerns about the MOU might be?

Response: We can't comment on their concerns until we explore them with the counties. Several aspects of participation need to be clarified before a decision can be made about formal or informal participation. Although the issues just came in a day ago, a quick study suggests it might be possible to resolve them all in ways that might enable full participation, at least by Sierra County and perhaps by Catron County. We don't know about Cochise County because we have heard nothing from them in several months.

Action Item: The Chair and other AMOC/AMWG members will meet with Sierra County (and perhaps Catron County) in May-June to discuss approval/participation issues, and will give a progress report at the July 9 AMWG meeting.

Action Item: The Chair will meet with SCAT again in May-June and with Cochise County to discuss cooperator status, and will give a progress update at the July 9 AMWG meeting.

Action Item: At the July 9 AWMG meeting, Lead Agencies and Cooperating Agencies will report on progress in drafting role and function statements per the MOU.

IFT Annual Report for 2003

The Interagency Field Team's 2003 annual report was distributed at today's meeting. The IFT is now up-to-date on its reporting obligations. The 2003 report contains more information from the WMAT's Fort Apache Indian Reservation because they gave us permission to do so. All Annual Reports for the Reintroduction Project will be converted to pdf files and made available to the public through the AGFD and USFWS Mexican wolf websites:

AGFD: http://www.azgfd.com/w_c/wolf_reintroduction.shtml
USFWS: <http://ifw2es.fws.gov/mexicanwolf/>

Question: How does "Fuller and Snow" relate to the 2003 Annual Report? **Response:** That study is cited because it defines the numbers of locations needed to estimate home range.

Question: Do the mortalities reported in the 2003 Annual Report include the wolf killed in the Black Hills of New Mexico? **Response:** Yes.

Action Item: AGFD and USFWS will ensure that all IFT Annual Reports (1998 through 2003) are available through their respective websites by May 28, 2004.

IFT 2004 Annual Work Plan and Budget

Attendees were briefly updated on work planning and budget efforts. Due to delayed Congressional approval of the FY04 Federal Budget, the USFWS just received its FY04 allocation this week. Nevertheless, the Cooperators have made progress in drafting the Work Plan and an operating budget for the IFT. They expect to have both finalized before the July 9 AMWG meeting, and will

discuss both in that session. This will be the first interagency work plan and budget for the IFT. It will help set the stage for presentation of a draft 2005 Annual Work Plan and Budget at the October 15 AMWG meeting. The intent is henceforth to have these instruments in place before the work year begins (on January 1).

The Work Plan covers what the IFT does, including: releases, recaptures, translocations, outreach, depredation response, etc. In short, it covers everything except law enforcement (LE). LE is in a separate effort, handled by commissioned officers from USFWS or one of the other Lead Agencies. The IFT includes:

IFT Leaders: Paul Overy (AGFD), Nick Smith (NMDGF) Krista Beazley (WMAT)

IFT Members: Shawna Nelson and Richard Bard (AGFD); Deion Hinton (WMAT); and John Oakleaf and Dan Stark (USFWS); J. Brad Miller et al. (WS)

In addition to these staff from U.S. agencies, the IFT includes a seasonal member (a wolf biologist) from Mexico, who is funded by a grant from Defenders of Wildlife, and assistance from a variety of other employees of cooperating agencies and seasonal volunteers.

Attendees were advised that the 2004 and 2005 Work Plans will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on whether they think IFT effort is sufficient or not in any given area of activity (such as monitoring, depredation response, or outreach). It is crucial for the cooperating agencies to know where the project is falling short of, or exceeding, needs and public expectations, so they can consider reallocating resources or trying to secure additional resources.

Question: What is Mexico's participation in the IFT? **Response:** This year, Mexico is sending a graduate student in biology to work with the IFT as an intern, to gain skills and experience as a wolf biologist that can be applied when a reintroduction project is implemented in Mexico. Defenders funds the internship. Mexico has been actively involved with us for several years. They have two recovery plans for the Mexican wolf, and are exploring reintroduction for this year or next year. Mexico participates in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) network of captive breeding specialists, and like us will rely on that program to produce releasable animals. Cross-training their biologists in the AZ-NM reintroduction project will help them tremendously.

Question: Who is in charge of the IFT? **Response:** No single person is in charge at an operational level. By design, the IFT is headed by three people: Paul Overy, Krista Beazley, and Nick Smith. They work together constantly, and each of them takes charge of the IFT for actions occurring on lands under their agency's responsibility. If SCAT were to sign on as a cooperator under the MOU, they could, if they chose to do so, also assign a SCAT employee to serve as IFT Leader for activities occurring on SCAT lands. The IFT takes its direction from the six Lead Agencies (AGFD, NMDGF, USFS, USFWS, WMAT, and WS), based on discussion with and recommendations from the AMWG Cooperating Agencies. The entire effort is guided by and accountable to the participating public through meetings like this one.

Question: The New Mexico Game Commission has asked its staff to revisit some things, such as the Recovery Area boundary issue. What has been done to comply? **Response:** The Commission directed the Department to investigate the boundary for recovery, and report back by December 15, 2004, and annually thereafter. The Commission also wants the Department to look at the recommendations that came out of the (2001) 3-year review of the Recovery Program. NMDGF will go through the recommendations and see what has been done, and what the Department thinks should be done. The Department will report to the Commission about this on December 8, 2004. The assessment will be coordinated with the 5-Year Review that AMWG will discuss later today. Findings in the Department's review should be consistent with 5-Year Review.

Question: What is New Mexico doing in regard to the 3-Year finding that the population will not be viable with the boundaries that are in place now? **Response:** As stated before, we will analyze the 3-Year Review's findings and recommendations and present our thoughts to the Commission in December 2004 and in the 5-Year Review as will be discussed shortly.

Issue: The CBD would like to see movement by the agencies to revise the nonessential experimental rule and the Recovery Area boundaries. **Response:** We know.

Action Item: The Lead Agencies and Cooperating Agencies will present and discuss the final 2004 Annual Work Plan and Budget at the July 9 AMWG meeting.

Action Item: The Lead Agencies and Cooperating Agencies will present and discuss the draft 2005 Annual Work Plan and Budget at the October 15 AMWG meeting.

Other Business

1. Status of Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator.

The USFWS was not able to fill the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator position from applicants responding to the GS 13 job-posting last year. The position is being re-posted now, at a GS 12-13 level, which hopefully will result in a greater number of qualified applicants. USFWS hopes to have a new Recovery Coordinator in place by August 2004.

Question: What is a GS, and what's the difference between a GS 13 and a GS 12? **Response:** GS refers to General Services (we think), and a GS 13 is a higher pay grade than a GS 12, indicating that it has greater responsibility and tends to operate under less direct supervision (we think).

Question: Who is the Acting Recovery Coordinator? Where does the buck stop? The AMWG notes for January 2004 state that an "An Acting Recovery Coordinator has been functioning while USFWS pursues filling the vacancy." **Response:** That statement was incorrect. Since Brian Kelly resigned as Recovery Coordinator, in June 2003, many individuals have contributed to decisions about wolf management and recovery.

However, USFWS has not formally designated anyone as Acting Recovery Coordinator. Ultimately, though, all USFWS decisions have been made under authority of, or directly by, the USFWS Region 2 Director, H. Dale Hall. Colleen Buchanan has handled most of the daily operations, and her supervisor is now Susan MacMullin. Clearly the Federal buck stops at the Regional Director, but as much as possible Colleen and Susan try to stop the buck before it gets to him so he can focus on any bigger issues. USFWS does not anticipate a change in this approach over the next several months.

2. Wolf Mortalities in 2003 and 2004

As previously discussed, 13 of the project's wild wolves are known to have died in 2003 and two in 2004. Both of the latter died in January. The last one died on January 22. No new information has been received from the LE agents involved in investigating the mortalities, so we have nothing new to report to you.

Question: Do LE investigations typically take this long? **Response:** Yes. First, most wolf mortalities don't yield the kind of detail (evidence) that is needed to confirm the ultimate cause of death. Also, the investigations are often delayed by lack of resources. USFWS does not have the kinds of forensic resources that we tend to see on television. Sometimes it takes years for laboratory analyses, even for an endangered species, to move through the priority chain.

Question: What about getting more people out there? **Response:** AGFD is at maximum right now. However, we will continue to explore opportunities for the reserve officer program to provide more assistance. NMDGF is tapped out, too. During the last hunt, NMDGF did step up and get more commissioned people out there. This is crucial for enforcement visibility, and to let people know that wolves are out there.

Question: Is NMDGF maxed because of funding limits? **Response:** Yes, but NMDGF is actually in pretty good shape. Getting more money from the legislature for more officers may be tough, but we will continue trying. We have put up a bunch more signs, with help from volunteers like Nancy Kaminski.

Question: The NGOs have raised \$35,000 to add to the Federal reward of \$10,000 for information about who has killed these wolves. Why aren't the agencies including that in their monthly updates? **Response:** The wording in our updates about rewards comes from our LE programs. We will look into this and report at the July 9 AMWG meeting about progress resolving this.

Attendees were then briefed on AMOC discussions of IFT recommendations that are intended to help reduce wolf mortalities:

- a. Loaning radio receivers. Receivers were loaned about 4 or 5 times last year. They are loaned so local residents can more closely monitor wolves that are close to human habitations or livestock, so IFT staff can be alerted quickly if a situation develops that might result in a translocation or other intervention response.
 - b. Increased enforcement.
 - i. AGFD has maximizing its efforts and has no more resources to commit. Patrols have been increased during hunts, and reserve officers and unit watches are used to increase general enforcement capacity. AGFD Wildlife Managers (commissioned officers) know what a wolf is and is not. Wolf information is provided in our hunt guidelines, signs are posted throughout the occupied areas, and an information packet is sent to all successful big game applicants drawn for game management units in the recovery area. Any incident information flows to FWS immediately. Investigation is a federal responsibility, but AGFD helps as needed and requested. AGFD does not think there is any more it can do to prevent unintentional killing of wolves. Cross certification of AGFD law enforcement officer to allow them to cover federal responsibilities might help, and is being considered pursuant to an enforcement MOU with USFWS. AGFD is aware that members of the public are interested in helping address enforcement issues, but they may not appreciate what's involved in becoming a reserve officer. It is difficult, and involves lots of training. Most of our reserve officers are retired from other enforcement agencies in which they were commissioned officers. Also, we can only take in as many reserve officers as we can support with training, supervision, vehicles, radios, etc. We are pretty well tapped out in terms of capacity to provide that support.
 - ii. NMDGF talked with its law enforcement folks about techniques, but not about effort because it is tapped out in that regard. NM officers already coordinate with USFWS, but NMDGF will explore an MOU like AGFD is doing to see if it would be beneficial.
 - iii. USFWS has filled its vacant Special Agent position in the White Mountains. The new agent will be working soon, and that should help coordination with the IFT and increase enforcement presence in the recovery area.
3. Update on Animal Husbandry/Depredation Study

As discussed in previous meetings, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) is conducting a pilot study of the effects of depredation on animal husbandry practices in a specific part of the AZ-NM Recovery Area. The study is focused on the Mexican wolf, but data are being collected on all predators. The study is intended to help develop strategies to reduce predator-livestock conflict.

WS, AGFD, and USFS are funding this project. The results from the first year, which we hope will be completed in May 2004, will be used to determine whether and how, and for how long, to continue the study. Dr. Stewart Breck, a staff scientist in WS's research program, is leading the study. Dr. Breck has solicited broad peer review of the pilot study. However, despite substantial arm-twisting by Dr. Breck, the peer review has gone slowly. The experts involved are busy people whose schedules are typically very full. Nevertheless, Dr. Breck hopes to present the results of the peer review, and an update on the pilot study, at the July 9 AMWG meeting.

Question: Are wolves in the area where the calves are tagged? **Response:** Yes. All of the usual suspects are there: bears, lions, coyotes, and wolves.

Question: Can you reveal who the peer reviewers are? **Response:** No. Dozens of experts or appropriately knowledgeable people were asked to review the study. They are independent scientists and the funding agencies do not know who they are. This is intended to help ensure objectivity, and maintain the integrity of the process.

Question: What about structure of study? What can you say about that? **Response:** This is a pilot study. This first year has been a study to learn how to do the study. It's on a single ranch, but as stated previously we will not identify the ranch or the specific area in which the study is being conducted. Dr. Breck is in charge of everything in the study. The funding agencies have nothing to do with the peer review or the data analyses. [Note: as stated at the January 2004 AMWG meeting, due to existing litigation WS is prohibited from giving any information on its cooperators to a third party (Doe et al. vs. Veneman. Civ. No. W99CA335, US District Court, Waco District, Texas).]

Question: Since conditions change from year to year, might that study have to go on forever? **Response:** Yes, things will keep changing: the predator and prey populations all fluctuate, the weather changes from year to year, etc. We will pass this comment on to Stewart.

Question: In the EIS, white-tailed deer were identified as wolf prey base, and that's not what we see. It's mostly elk. What about that? **Response:** The EIS identified white-tailed deer as the primary historical prey base of Mexican wolves. It also stated that prey populations changed with and after wolves were extirpated, and that white-tailed and mule deer and elk were likely to be taken by reintroduced wolves.

Question: Maybe you should call it a pilot program, and not a study. For any long-term study, the first year is a pilot year. **Response:** Good point. We will.

4. News Releases and Flow of Project Information

The cooperating agencies are now implementing the “information flow matrix” that we discussed at the January 2004 AMWG meeting. The matrix was developed because we wanted to have consistent perspectives on information flow. We have that now, along with a list of who needs to be contacted for each area. These guidelines are in place, and have helped us improve daily and routine communication (all Cooperators agree both are better than a year ago) but we have not formally run anything through them yet as far as a media release goes.

Action Item: Disseminate the final matrix by May 28, 2004.

5. Use of M-44s in the Recovery Area

An M-44 is a capsule of sodium cyanide. It’s one of many tools that WS uses to control predators. WS has consulted on M-44 use with USFWS, and a Biological Opinion is in place that guides their use. The Biological Opinion says that WS will not use M-44s in occupied wolf habitat, which is defined in the nonessential experimental population rule. However, WS actually restricts M-44 use in the Recovery Area more than it is required to. In 2003, WS didn’t use any M-44s in NM in occupied habitat.

In fact, no wolf mortalities have been attributed to M-44 use. WS agents are very careful when wolves are moving through, and the IFT updates us daily on wolf movements. WS does not give M-44s to other agencies or individuals to use.

NMDA regulates all pesticides in New Mexico, and that includes M-44 use by private individuals. We have a full-time endangered species specialist to make sure there is no conflict. There isn’t much use of M-44s now. What we do is train and permit private applicators. M-44 use is very restricted. We know who is doing what, and we know if wolves are moving through an area. If they are, we notify the people, but we can’t require them to stop using M-44s.

Question: How do M-44s work? **Response:** An M-44 is a small tube loaded with cyanide. We bury the tube in ground. The tube is a spring-loaded ejector; bait is placed on it. If a predator pulls the bait, the cyanide is ejected in its face and mouth. Death occurs almost immediately.

Question: Why are we only talking about New Mexico? **Response:** Arizona law prohibits use of toxicants on public lands, so M-44s cannot be used there. In New Mexico, M-44s can be used on private or public land.

Question: What is the definition of occupied habitat? **Response:** According to the nonessential experimental population rule, it is an area of confirmed presence of a pack, or a pair of wolves. See the nonessential experimental population rule for the specifics. Note: there is a small-scale map of occupied habitat at end of the 2003 Annual Report.

Question: Please describe the communication about M-44 use in the 5-mile radius of an occupied area. How do you know when wolves are there? **Response:** NMDA and WS get daily updates about wolf locations. This has not been a problem recently.

Question: But we can't be sure that it hasn't been a problem, can we? Some wolves are missing, and we don't know where they are, or if they might have been killed by M-44s. **Response:** True.

6. Five-Year Review

The Cooperators are a year behind in this area, but we are making progress now. The handout available at this meeting defines three components: technical, administrative, and socio-economic. The 5-Year Review basically begins with an analysis of the 3-Year Review (which was conducted in 2001), and integrates information gained since then. The likely elements of the first two components (technical and administrative) are pretty well known, but we haven't fleshed out the socio-economic component yet. Most likely we will hire a local (southwestern) consultant to do the socio-economic work.

Question: How can ranchers be held accountable for removing carcasses (see Administrative Element 11)? We can't get vehicle in because of road restrictions, we can't burn carcass because of fire dangers, and we are not packing it out if it stinks. **Response:** Please remember that the elements in this element are simply the findings from the 3-Year Review. They identify what we must review, not our recommendations. We need to analyze each of the recommendations from the 3-Year Review, and identify whether they have been implemented them, and why or why not. We also have to identify whether we still consider them valid, and if so what we recommend for implementation. The 5-Year has yet to be written, and you folks will have opportunities to help do that.

Public Comment: A rancher was identified who doesn't agree with the science in this carcass issue from the 3-Year Review. Wolves killed a cow of his; they didn't learn to eat beef from a carcass. They learned from the cow they killed and ate. A lawsuit from CBD, a copy of which is available at the back table, also recommends carcass removal. We need to look at the intent behind these recommendations, and their feasibility and effectiveness. The newspapers and the suit make people think ranchers have half their herd lying dead. **Response:** No response.

Public Comment: The CBD clarified that the document provided by AMWG today is not a lawsuit, but a request for redress through the Federal Administrative Procedures Act. Regardless, scavenging on livestock may increase the likelihood that a wolf will kill livestock. Also, ranchers don't need to burn or removed cow carcasses. They could use lyme to make the carcass unpalatable.

Question: Why is Component C (socio-economic) not being done in house, and what criteria are being used to select a contractor? **Response:** We believe this is the best approach. AGFD, NMDGF, and USFWS do not have staff qualified to do this part of the review. We haven't selected a consultant, nor have we decided on the criteria. Our concern is that East Coast groups don't understand western ways, so we're looking to contract one or more of the local universities in Arizona and/or New Mexico to do this. The consultant's work would come back to us, and be embedded in the overall document that undergoes public for review. Over the next couple of weeks, USFWS, with assistance from Catron County and NMDA, will define selection criteria and identify potential contractors.

Comment: Whoever is selected should not have a record of fighting endangered species programs. We want assurance of this. **Response:** Bias goes both ways. We want objectivity and good science. Whoever the consultant ends up being, they will not have a pro or an anti wolf bias.

Comment: Is genetic integrity addressed in the review? **Response:** No. This is not the place to address that, although it is an important component. However, this is a non-issue. All of the experts in this field have agreed that the Mexican wolf captive population, and thus the reintroduction population, is genetically viable and not flawed by hybridization.

Question: Will the cost of the program be addressed in the review? **Response:** Yes, Parts C 1 and 2 address this. We should probably include the historical cost that was incurred in exterminating wolves to see the big cost-benefit picture.

7. Development of Role and Function Statements

See discussion under "Interagency MOU."

8. Other Items

Comment: CBD stated that it appears that **Action Item** AI from the January 30 AMWG meeting slipped through cracks. It has not been addressed today. What's the status? **Response:** Correct on both counts. USFWS will go to the RD to determine who will be accountable for making such decisions, and we will bring an answer back to the next meeting.

Action Item: USFWS will bring the Region 2 Director's response to CBD's request for documenting all wolf-control decisions in writing, with signatures of the decision-maker(s), to the April 2004 AMWG meeting – Colleen Buchanan.

Question: What differences are there between the current protocols and the protocols in the 1998 wolf management document? **Response:** The control protocol is virtually the same, but the others have evolved.

Question: The control protocol was supposed to be implemented by the Recovery Coordinator, and now it seems that a committee is doing it. Who actually does it? **Response:** The authority ultimately rolls up to the Regional Director.

Question: Are any documents signed for control? **Response:** USFWS affirmed there are. The RD signs a document making the decision for lethal control. Non-lethal removal decisions are not signed. The State or Tribal directors would sign if they needed to.

Report from the Interagency Field Team

GRCO Supervisor Hector Ruedas read seven letters regarding a proposed wolf release into Moonshine Park: Hutchinson, Parks, Luce, Gould, Awtry, Walkins, Bunnell). Copies of these letters were retained by and are available from the AMWG Chair, c/o the Arizona Game and Fish Department, 2221 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix AZ 85023-4399. All opposed such a release, and several opposed any wolf reintroduction. Mr. Gould also spoke out against release into Moonshine Park. He has a ranch on the upper Blue, and spoke out against people that don't live there and think ranchers don't care about the land. He said that logging and ranching are the biggest moneymakers in Greenlee County, and both are being hurt by endangered species and wolves. Every rancher contributes greatly to this County.

At this point, the Chair intervened and asked that any further comment be delayed until the IFT makes its presentation and describes what it has proposed in the way of releases.

The IFT then gave a PowerPoint presentation on IFT activities and other wolf-related topics, including their recommendations for a release in Arizona (three possible sites: Maness Peak, Moonshine Park, and Fish Bench) and two re-releases in New Mexico in 2004.

Question: Why can't we put these wolves on Fort Apache? **Response:** The IFT looked at all the options, and we believe these are the best release sites. The San Carlos Apache Reservation cannot be used because they are not within the Recovery Area and they oppose wolf reintroduction.

Question: You're putting wolves in places where the only prey are cattle. You don't listen to the ranchers who know the land. **Response:** We are committed to taking public input.

Question: Well, the public says you hear us talk, but you don't act on what we say. We know the land. **Response:** None.

Question: What prey base study have you done on the proposed release areas? **Response:** Prey is one of the criteria that we look at.

Question: I am skeptical of your population estimate because you're looking at end of year snapshot. If you look at summer, it will be different. **Response:** No, the population continues to increase every year.

Question: According to the EIS, you needed 10 breeding pairs by the end of 2003, and you had 3. **Response:** The 5-Year Review will explain things a lot better.

Question: Has WMAT been reimbursed annually for relocation of wolves? **Response:** They're Cooperators, and USFWS has been providing funding to WMAT for employees who are involved in wolf management – not just for relocation of wolves.

Question: Why is Moonshine Park being considered? There are lots of people are there. **Response:** All three Arizona sites are close to boundaries. Moonshine does not have as many cattle as the other two.

Question: Based on your slide about wolf attacks vs. coyote and bear attacks across North America, am I supposed to be relieved about wolves not attacking me? **Response:** Yes.

Question: The Black Hills wolf – how many livestock did it kill before it was taken? **Response:** It's been missing for two weeks.

Question: How many miles did it travel? **Response:** Fifty, but 100 total from release site.

Question: Why are you releasing wolves so close to people? **Response:** We will re-examine this, but there isn't anyplace that is not occupied by people.

Question: Are you releasing wolves in NM that were born in captivity? For the record, the CBD believes that releasing pups born in captivity into the Secondary Recovery Area is in contradiction to the existing Mexican wolf nonessential experimental population rule. **Response:** USFWS believes that the nonessential experimental population rule allows for New Mexico release of pups born in captivity to wolves that were in the wild but which were recaptured.

Question: Cattle will be in Moonshine next winter if they're on a rotation system. That area has a stable population of mule deer, and wolves are going to mess it up. Why would you do that? **Response:** This is just a recommendation from the IFT to use this site. The decision hasn't been made where to release the wolves. We will look at all the criteria again.

Question: The FS says regeneration of aspen is big. 80% is being browsed by elk. Large elk pop there. good prey density for wolves. FS wants to stimulate the aspen.

Question: What are these uncollared wolves? Do you know? **Response:** We do genetic analyses on the wolves. We know they are not hybrids with coyotes, etc.

Review of Action Items and Assignments

Action Items were not reviewed, due to lack of time.

Schedule and Locations of 2004 AMWG Meetings

July 9, Reserve or Silver City 1:30 - 5:00

October 15, Springerville 1:30 - 5:00

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:40 p.m. to allow for a wedding that was scheduled for shortly thereafter.